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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USEU BRUSSELS 001537

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [EUN](#) [BR](#) [CU](#)  
SUBJECT: NO EU UNITY GOING INTO REVIEW OF COMMON POSITION  
ON CUBA

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Classified By: Political Officer Vincent Carver for reasons 1.5 (B/D).

SUMMARY

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**¶1.** (C/NF) EU and member state officials told visiting WHA DAS Madison and Cuba Coordinator McCarry May 2-3 that the EU has not yet reached consensus on what parts of its Common Position on Cuba will be renewed in June. Contacts agreed on the need for Cubans to decide their future with encouragement from the international community. The EU appears split, however, regarding what strategy to use regarding Cuba. Several EU and member state contacts confirmed to DAS Madison and Coordinator McCarry that Spain, with support from the German MFA, France, and Italy want to drop the suspended sanctions when renewing the EU's Common Position on Cuba in June. Poland, the Czech Republic, and to a lesser extent, Hungary oppose dropping the sanctions. END SUMMARY

CUBANS PLAYING ON EU LACK OF UNITY

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**¶2.** (C/NF) Karl Buck, Council Secretariat Latin America Unit Head, noted that discussions over renewal of the EU's common position on Cuba is just beginning; in a veiled reference to Spanish FM Moratinos' visit and a not-so-veiled criticism of Czech positions, he lamented the potential "loss" of EU unity regarding Cuba and therefore a decrease of EU credibility in Cuba. Madison and McCarry stressed that the GOC seeks to create division among EU member states and divide the EU and the U.S. They underscored that a united IC stand on human rights and the release of all political prisoners on the island, as well as continued engagement of Cuba's democratic opposition, is critical.

EU WORKING GROUP ON LATIN AMERICA:

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**¶3.** (C) The German Presidency hosted a Latin America Working Group (COLAT) session (21 member state representatives attended) which Madison and McCarry addressed. Madison and McCarry noted that repression in Cuba has increased in the past several months, is broad based, particularly targets the young, and appears more systematic. Castro, while incapacitated, continues to remain a strong factor in the minds of both Cuban authorities and the opposition. They underscored that the U.S. wants to work with the EU and other partners, including Brazil, to support a sovereign and democratic Cuba that is reintegrated in the Western Hemisphere. More specifically, they emphasized that USG

seeks to think creatively with partners on how to push for the release of all political prisoners in Cuba and to create the space necessary for a genuine dialogue on the island. This process, they added, should be directed by the Cuban people.

¶4. (C) In a discussion of the current situation in Cuba, several member state representatives made interventions regarding the Cuban economy, role of the military, and promotion of human rights. The Spanish rep outlined the "results" of FM Moratinos' visit and noted that there "is a will for change" in Cuba and for "progress toward normalization of relations with the EU." The Commission rep observed that Commission assistance projects to Cuba have largely ceased to operate as a result of Havana's decision to reject Commission funding -- a decision he characterized as the GOC's response to EU criticism of the regime.

¶5. (C) DAS Madison highlighted Cuba's efforts to create division within the EU and between the EU and the USG. To address some Cuban efforts to create division by working through third parties, the USG informed CUBINT that should they have something to say to the USG, they should do so through the Interests Section channel. She underscored that countries should be mindful of Cuban nationalism and noted that the Unity for Freedom statement from the democratic opposition states that they do not believe that their human rights or their future should be subject to the state of their government's relations or negotiations with another government. She underscored that the opposition was feeling particularly vulnerable at this time and that engaging them directly would continue to be essential.

¶6. (C) Nicolas Pascual de la Parte, Council Secretariat Policy Unit Head for Latin America, opined that neither the U.S. embargo nor the EU's critical dialogue with Cuba has brought desired results. No one, he added, knows what the rapid changes -- which the Cubans interpret as changes within the regime -- on the island truly mean. He agreed with

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Madison and McCarry that it is up to the Cuban themselves to determine their path to democracy. He also agreed that the opposition's "Unity for Freedom" document is "of utmost importance." A united opposition will be the main factor generating change in Cuba, "and we should support it," he stressed.

¶7. (C) Madison and McCarry noted the U.S.-EU Summit language on Cuba, emphasizing the role of the international community in supporting the peaceful, democratic opposition in Cuba. Several member state reps, including the Dutch rep, reviewed potential technical support, with the Hungarian rep stressing that Budapest is "ready to actively share" Hungary's transition experiences and the Polish rep saying Warsaw "totally shares your (U.S.) evaluation" of the situation. The German Presidency observed that, while the EU and the U.S. may take different approaches at times regarding Cuba, we share a common goal -- helping the Cubans establish a democratic and free system. "It should be possible to support each other and work together," she concluded. The discussion with EU COLAT representatives continued with a smaller group over lunch hosted by USEU, with Pascual de la Parte expressing frustration that the EU has been unable to get Latin American countries to take common positions with Brussels on Cuba and many other issues. According to Pascual de la Parte, Mexico and several other Latin American states hesitate to criticize Havana in order not to provoke leftist parties in their own countries.

BUT WATCH THE SPANISH ... AND THE GERMANS

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¶8. (C/NF) In a separate meeting May 2, Pascual de la Parte told Madison and McCarry that Spain is pushing to lift the

political "sanctions" (technically suspended) from the EU's Common Position. According to Pascual de la Parte, the Spanish and Germans may have struck a gentlemen's agreement: Madrid accepted the U.S.-EU Summit language on Cuba and in return, would obtain German support for lifting the political sanctions. He added that the German MFA appears to support this move. The German Chancellery has not yet gotten involved. Pascual de la Parte added that Spain is supported by France, Italy, Greece, and Cyprus. Poland, the Czech Republic, and to a slightly lesser extent, Hungary firmly oppose softening the Common Position. The UK and the Netherlands are undecided. Pascual de la Parte agreed with Madison and McCarry that lifting the suspended sanctions now would send the wrong signal to both the Cuban Government and the Cuban opposition, and would create a rift between the EU and the U.S. when closer coordination was critical. Madison and McCarry noted that it would be de facto legitimization of an unelected successor government.

COMMISSION: CONFIRMING THE SPLIT

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¶9. (C/NF) Madison and McCarry also outlined U.S. views to Commission Director for Latin America Tomas Dupla del Moral and Desk Officer Javier Nino Perez. The Commission officials complained about their lack of activities and sources of information in Cuba, given the GOC's restrictions on Commission funding and movement, calling this an "untenable situation." They confirmed Pascual de la Parte's observation that there are two camps forming in the run-up to debate over the EU's Common Position -- those member states who want to lift the suspended sanctions, and those who oppose such a move. Dupla del Moral said that the Commission is searching for an opening in Cuba and lifting the sanctions might be one (but not the only) instrument for ultimately showing support to the opposition. Madison and McCarry strongly disagreed, emphasizing that lifting the suspended sanctions now would send the wrong message, hurt and demoralize the opposition, and provide the Cuban regime a political boost.

INCOMING PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY: WISHING THE ISSUE WOULD "GO AWAY"

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¶10. (C/NF) Madison and McCarry outlined U.S. policies and views May 3 to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) ambassadors of Portugal (incoming President) and Slovenia (President Jan.-June 2008). In yet another indication that the incoming Portuguese Presidency may be a weak follow-on to the German Presidency, Portuguese PSC Ambassador Durrant Pais told Madison and McCarry May 3 that, "We were rather optimistic that Cuba would go away." With a debate beginning over the Common Policy, this may not be the case. Durrant Pais characterized Moratinos' visit as "controversial," but added that Spain had demonstrated flexibility in agreeing to

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the U.S.-EU Summit language on Cuba. Slovenian PSC Ambassador Ipavic stressed the need for the EU and for the EU and U.S. to maintain a united position on Cuba.

CENTRAL EUROPEANS AND BRITS: MORE SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. VIEWS

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¶11. (C/NF) In a separate meeting, the Czech and Polish PSC ambassadors and UKEU Mission reps told McCarry that their countries support renewing the Common Position. The Pole, noting that the U.S.-EU Summit language on Cuba was "highly controversial" for some member states, said Warsaw nevertheless sought EU-U.S. convergence on Cuba. UK reps said there was general agreement within the EU for a twin-track approach, promoting discussions with both the government and the opposition. For its part, the UK would like to see a dialogue between Cuba and the EU, including on human rights. The Lithuanian PSC Ambassador noted parallels between Cuba

and Belarus. The Czech Ambassador said Prague is willing to propose even tougher language in the Common Position and would welcome U.S. advice. He predicted "an intensive, not easy debate" in the run-up to the EU's June decision, stressing that, "Only one country is enough to (block consensus and) drop the sanctions. This would be quite a nightmare." McCarry reviewed U.S. policies and underscored that dropping the sanctions would send the wrong signal at the wrong time and would play into the Cuban regime's hands.

¶12. (SBU) Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Development Policy Director Peter Koeppinger outlined a report by several European NGOs supported by KAS, in which the NGOs recommended that the EU take concrete measures to pressure Havana on human rights and democracy. The report also called for further EU support for civil society in Cuba and for the EU to work with the U.S., the UN, and Latin American states on a common approach to Cuba. Madison and McCarry welcomed the report's call for concrete actions and made suggestions on ways to drive the recommendations into the EU process, where interlocutors were clearly looking for ideas on next steps.

¶13. (C/NF) In the run-up to the European Council in June, USEU will closely monitor and lobby member state representatives to maintain the EU's Common Position without dropping the suspended sanctions.

¶14. (U) DAS Madison and Coordinator McCarry have cleared this message. Their meeting with Belgian MFA reps reported septel.  
MCKINLEY

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